



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

Tennessee Recognizes 10 years of Statewide Suicide Prevention Initiatives

Nashville—In Tennessee, an estimated 850 men, women, and youth die by suicide each year—more than the number who die from homicide, AIDS, or drunk driving. September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities wants to make Tennesseans aware of this issue and let them know that suicides can be prevented.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 15-24 in Tennessee and throughout the entire nation. The rate of suicide in Tennessee is 14.4 per 100,000 individuals, higher than the national average of 10.8 per 100,000 individuals, which unfortunately, places Tennessee's suicide rate 19th in the nation.

In order to address these negative statistics, Tennessee has become a national leader in suicide prevention, programming, and planning. 2008 is the 10th anniversary of an organized effort across Tennessee to implement statewide suicide prevention initiatives.

A defining moment was the development of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network in 2000. TSPN is a coordinated network comprised of eight regional groups throughout the state. Another suicide prevention initiative includes TDMHDD assisting the Jason Foundation in providing suicide prevention curriculums in many Tennessee schools. Tennessee has also been the host state for the National Suicide and the Black Church conference in Memphis held every two years with the next one in 2009.

TDMHDD is the federal grant recipient for the Tennessee Lives Count project which has provided Gatekeeper Training to over 16,000 adults who work with youth at high risk for suicide. Gatekeepers are trained to recognize the early warning signs of suicide and in the "how to's" of accessing community resources. The Public Service Announcement for the TLC project has reached over 500,000 people each month and calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline have doubled for Tennessee.

"In 90 percent of instances, suicide is the result of unrecognized, untreated, or poorly treated mental illness and can be said to be the terminal outcome of certain mental illnesses," stated Virginia Trotter Betts, TDMHDD Commissioner and one of the developers of the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide. "Suicide is the leading cause of violent deaths worldwide, above

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homicide and death due to natural disasters. Suicide can be prevented, but Tennesseans need to keep educating themselves about mental health and mental illness in order to seek early, effective and needed help for themselves or their loved ones.”

Suicide does not discriminate; no community is immune. More suicides occur among the workforce than any other demographic, and the majority of those who die by suicide have seen their primary health care provider in the month prior to their death.

A symposium on suicide prevention is being held on September 18 and 19 at the Millennium Maxwell House, 2025 Metrocenter Blvd., Nashville, TN 37228. Please contact the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at (615) 297-1077 for more information.

Please visit www.tspn.org for information on suicide and suicide prevention. For additional resources and mental health information, please contact TDMHDD’s Office of Communications at (615) 253-4812 or visit www.state.tn.us/mental.

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